

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claim 8 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter, and amend the claims as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A business method by which a payer and an individual other than the payer are authorized for access to digital medical image data generated by up to a plurality of imaging facilities, the business method comprising the steps of:

receiving digital medical image data generated by the imaging facilities using a gateway at each imaging facility;

transmitting the received digital medical image data from the gateway to a central server via a network and storing the digital medical image data at the central server;

receiving an upload of radiology report on one of the stored digital medical image data;

linking the uploaded radiology report to a matching stored digital medical image data, so as to form a study comprised of stored digital medical image data and an associated radiology report;

receiving demographic data associated with the study, including information on the associated facilities, physicians and payers;

providing the payer with access to the stored digital medical image data study and associated demographic data via an authorization process on the network for a fee;

forwarding access to the study and associated demographic data stored digital medical image data to an individual other than the payer, wherein access is forwarded to the other individual by the payer and the other individual is thereafter provided with access to the stored digital medical image data study and associated demographic data via the authorization process on the network; and

notifying the other individual that access to the study and associated demographic data has been forwarded to him, together with information on how to access the study and associated demographic data [[it]].

2. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the digital medical image data is transmitted from the gateway to the central server using an authenticated session over a secure protocol.

3. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the network is the Internet.

4. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the central server is remote from both the imaging facilities and the payer.

5. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of determining if the digital medical image data received by the gateway is associated with the payer,

wherein only digital medical image data determined to be associated with the payer is transmitted to the central server and stored.

6. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the digital medical image data is received by the gateway using a DICOM protocol.

7. (Original) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the digital medical image data is transmitted to the central server and stored in the same format as it was received by the gateway.

8. (Cancelled).

9. (Currently Amended) A business method according to Claim 1 [[8]], wherein the report is encrypted and transmitted to the central server via the network using an authenticated and secure communication session.

10. (Currently Amended) A business method according to Claim 1[[8]], further comprising the step of providing an interface for the payer to forward access for the study and associated demographic data both of the stored digital medical image data and the corresponding reports to the other individual.

11. (Currently Amended) A business method according to Claim 1[[8]], further comprising the step of recording access to the study and associated demographic data stored digital medical image data and corresponding reports,

wherein access records are provided to the payer via the network for studies digital medical image data and corresponding reports associated with the payer.

12. (Currently Amended) A business method according to Claim 1, where access to the study and associated demographic data stored digital medical image data and corresponding reports is provided using a web-based viewer.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Previously Presented) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the other individual is granted access for a limited time.

15. (Previously Presented) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein there are limitations on the power of the payer to forward access to other individuals.

16. (Previously Presented) A business method according to Claim 1, wherein the other individual is notified by e-mail.